

CLAIMS

1. A method of pasteurising and vacuum packing food (2), comprising the following steps:
 - 5 placing the food (2) on a tray (1) having a flexible bottom (7) and stiff lateral walls (8) extending in the vertical direction of the tray (1), up to a filling degree of 40-60% of the maximum volume of the tray (1); covering the tray (1) with a flexible cover layer (3) to
 - 10 form a package (5); providing a one-way valve (4) for one-directional communication from the interior of the package (5) to the exterior thereof; pasteurising the contents inside the package (5) thus formed by means of microwaves; closing the valve (4) upon completed
 - 15 pasteurisation of the package and cooling the package (5), whereby a vacuum is created in the package (5) in such a manner that the package (5) with the vacuum-packaged food (2) therein presents a centre portion where the distance between said flexible cover layer (3) and
 - 20 said bottom (7) is shorter than the distance between said flexible cover layer (3) and said bottom (7) at the peripheral edges of the package.
2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the one-
 - 25 way valve (4) is arranged on said flexible cover layer (3).
3. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said one-way valve (4) is applied on said flexible cover layer (3)
 - 30 during the step of covering said tray (1) with the flexible cover (3).
4. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding claims, wherein said food (2) includes all ingredients
 - 35 necessary for a ready-to-eat dish.

5. A package (5) for use in a method of pasteurisation and vacuum-packing food (2), said method comprising the steps placing the food on a tray (1) up to a filling degree of 40-60% of the maximum volume of the tray (1), covering the tray (1) with a flexible cover layer (3), providing a one-way valve (4) for one-directional communication from the interior of the package (5) to the exterior thereof, pasteurising the contents inside the package (5) thus formed by means of microwaves, closing the valve (4) upon completed pasteurisation of the package (5) and cooling the package (5), whereby a vacuum is created in the package (5), characterised in that the tray (1) has a flexible bottom and rigid lateral walls (8) extending in the vertical direction of the tray (1), said package (5) with vacuum-packaged food (2) contained therein presenting a centre portion, where the distance between said flexible cover layer (3) and said bottom (7) is shorter than the distance between said flexible cover layer (3) and said bottom (7) at the peripheral edges of the package (5).

6. A package (5) as claimed in claim 5, wherein the bottom (7) of said tray (1) has a convex shape as seen from below, when the pressure inside the package (5) exceeds or equals the pressure exteriorly thereof.

7. A package (5) as claimed in any one of claims 5 and 6, wherein the bottom (7) of the tray (1) is formed with a section (14) that is spaced from the periphery of the bottom, which is essentially flat.

8. A package (5) as claimed in claim 7, wherein said section (14) forms more than 40% of the total area of the bottom (7).

9. A package (5) as claimed in any one of claims 5-8, wherein the valve (4) is arranged on said flexible cover layer (3).

5 10. A package (5) as claimed in claim 9, wherein said valve (4) consists of a slit formed in said flexible cover layer (3) and of a reclosable adhesive film (6) extending across the slit.

10 11. A package (5) as claimed in any one of claims 5-10, wherein the valve (4) is arranged to emit a sound signal when vapour is flowing through said valve.

15 12. A package (5) as claimed in any one of claims 5-8, wherein the tray part located at the periphery of the bottom (7) extends at an angle to the direction of extension of the tray.